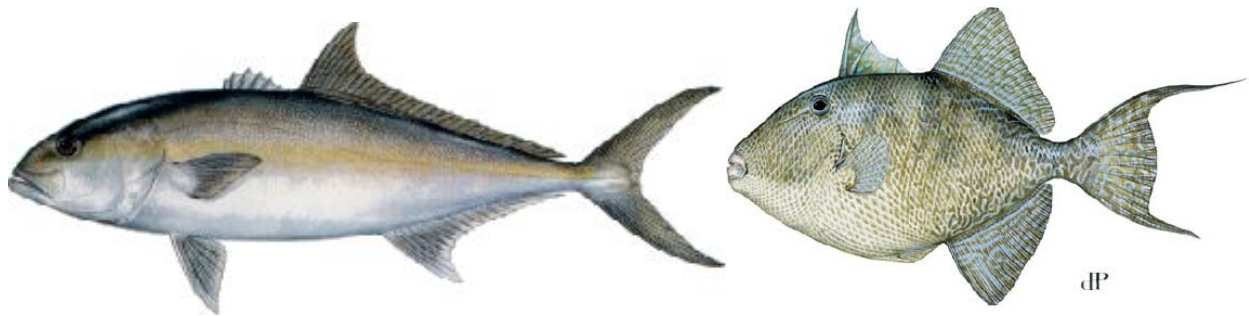


Gulf of Mexico Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish

Proposed Amendment 30A Management Measures

Frequently Asked Questions

April 2008



Why is NOAA Fisheries Service proposing to implement new measures in the Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack and gray triggerfish fisheries?

- The most recent greater amberjack stock assessment indicates the stock continues to be overfished and is undergoing overfishing, compromising the objectives of the current Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (Council) rebuilding plan.
- Gray triggerfish are also undergoing overfishing, but the overfished status is currently unknown because the Council has yet to define an overfished threshold.
- Adjusted catch levels and management measures are proposed to rebuild these stocks and end overfishing. Additionally, management targets and thresholds for gray triggerfish will be set.

What are rebuilding plans and why are they necessary?

The Council must implement measures to rebuild overfished populations managed under a fishery management plan (FMP). A **rebuilding plan** is a strategy where the catch of a species is limited to a point where over time, the population can rebuild to a level that can support the greatest possible sustainable harvest. The timeframe for a rebuilding plan should be as short as possible considering the status and biology of the overfished population as well as the needs of fishing communities. No rebuilding plan can exceed ten years unless biological or environmental conditions dictate otherwise. Rebuilding plans usually rely on annual landings to remain at or below a certain total allowable catch (TAC).

What is TAC? TAC is the total amount of fish allowed to be caught from a particular stock by all resource users over a particular period of time.

What are Accountability Measures (AMs) and Annual Catch Limits (ACLs)?

Amendment 30A addresses requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) that ACLs and AMs be in place for stocks undergoing overfishing by 2010. ACLs and AMs work together as a system to ensure that overfishing will not occur. The ACL must be set “at a level such that overfishing does not occur in the fishery.” AMs are management measures established with ACLs to end and prevent overfishing. Examples of AMs include seasonal closures, decreased trip or bag limits, or adjustments to quotas.

Why didn't the Council address allocation of greater amberjack and gray triggerfish between the recreational and commercial sectors?

At their November 2007 meeting, the Council recognized the difficulties involved in this type of decision and established an Allocation Ad Hoc Committee to examine fair and equitable ways to allocate all FMP resources between recreational and commercial fisheries. Once completed, the principles for setting allocations should be more transparent and understandable to the various sectors in the fishery.

Can I comment on the proposed measures?

Yes. NOAA Fisheries Service is currently excepting comments on Amendment 30A during a 60-day comment period which ends May 30, 2008. Other opportunities for comment will occur at a later date for the proposed rule and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. You may submit comments on Amendment 30A, identified by 0648-AV34, by any one of the following methods:

- Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NOAA Fisheries Service will accept anonymous comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.
- Mail: Peter Hood, Southeast Regional Office, NOAA Fisheries Service, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701.
- Fax: 727-824-5308, Attention: Peter Hood.

Greater Amberjack

What are the preferred long-term measures to end greater amberjack overfishing and allow stock recovery? How do the proposed management measures differ from past measures?

MANAGEMENT ACTION	2007 Management Measures	Preferred Management Measures in Amendment 30A
TAC	5.2 million pounds (mp)	1.9 mp for 2008 through 2010
Recreational bag limit	One fish/person/day (applies to captain & crew of for-hire vessels)	One fish/person/day (zero for captain & crew of for-hire vessels)
Recreational minimum size limit	28" fork length	30" fork length
Commercial minimum size limit	36" fork length	Same
Commercial fishing season	June 1 – end of February	Same
Commercial quota	None	503,000 pounds 2008-2010; 938,000 pounds 2011-2012
Accountability Measures	None	The AA would have the authority to shorten the season within the fishing year and in the following year if ACLs are exceeded or are projected to be exceeded.

What is the preferred rebuilding plan?

The preferred plan is a three-year stepped plan as outlined in Secretarial Amendment 2. Over the first two years of the current plan, harvest has exceeded TAC by about 38 percent. The 2006 stock assessment indicated that a 50 percent reduction in fishing mortality is needed starting in 2008 to continue the rebuilding plan. Under the preferred plan, directed TAC would be set as defined by the fishing mortality projections from the 2006 assessment for each three-year interval. Thus TAC would be 1.9 million pounds (mp) for 2008 through 2010. After 2010, TAC will be set based on an updated assessment. The Council selected this plan because it has a greater than 50 percent probability of allowing the stock to recover by 2012 and is the most conservative of the alternatives.

What are the preferred accountability measures?

The AA would have the authority to shorten the season within the fishing year and in the following year if ACLs are exceeded or are projected to be exceeded. For the commercial fishery, the AA can reduce the commercial quota in the following year by the amount the quota was exceeded in the previous year.

Gray Triggerfish

What are the preferred long-term measures to end gray triggerfish overfishing and allow stock recovery? How do the proposed management measures differ from past measures?

MANAGEMENT ACTION	2007 Management Measures	Preferred Management Measures in Amendment 30A
TAC	None	Set the TAC for 2008 at 0.5 mp, 2009 at 0.58 mp, and 2010 at 0.66 mp. TAC would remain at the 2010 level until changed via subsequent rulemaking.
Recreational minimum size limit	12" fork length	14" fork length
Recreational bag limit	Included in the 20 fish aggregate reef fish bag limit	Same
Commercial minimum size limit	12" total length	14" fork length
Commercial quota	None	80,000 pounds for 2008, 93,000 pounds for 2009, and 106,000 pounds for 2010 and subsequent years unless revised by subsequent rulemaking.

What is the preferred rebuilding plan?

According to the preferred overfished threshold defined in Amendment 30A, gray triggerfish are overfished and therefore require a rebuilding plan. The preferred plan would allow the stock to rebuild within six years. TAC would be set annually based on projections from the 2006 stock assessment. TAC for 2008 would be 0.5 mp, TAC in 2009 would be 0.58 mp, and TAC in 2010 would be 0.66 mp. TAC in subsequent years would stay at the 2010 level unless changed through subsequent rulemaking. The Council selected this plan because it allows harvest to increase annually and should rebuild the stock in less than 10 years.

What are the preferred accountability measures?

The proposed AMs gives the AA the authority to shorten the fishing season for a sector should landings go over the ACLs. For gray triggerfish, the recreational AM would provide the AA the authority to shorten the fishing year in the following year if the ACL is exceeded, while the commercial AM would give the AA the authority to shorten the fishing season within the fishing year and in the following year if the commercial ACL is exceeded. Gray triggerfish ACLs would be defined as multi-year running average landings, with exception of the first year which would use only 2008 landings.